

REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, claim 2 is cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer and claims 1, 3, 11, and 13 are amended. Accordingly, claims 1 and 3-29 are pending and under consideration.

Rejection of Claims 1-29 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The Office Action rejects claims 1-29 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0159805 to Sato and in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,580,041 issued to Nakayama. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Sato and Nakayama, taken separately or in combination, do not disclose, teach, or suggest at least, "wherein when the first guide side is contacted by the paper coming out of the printing unit, each of the plurality of guide members rotate in a first direction and balance themselves with a force applied by the paper, and returns to an original position by rotating in a second direction opposite to the first direction after the paper completely passes through the printing unit," as recited in claim 1.

On page 2, Nakayama asserts that a first flapper 55 and a second flapper 56 of fig. 6 of Sato teach "guide members" as recited in claim 1. On page 2, the Office Action also notes,

"Sato fails to teach and/or suggest each of the plurality of guide members rotate and balance themselves with a force applied by the paper. Notes: Sato teaches a spring mechanism (par. 59 & 67) that controls the guide member (forward and backward motion), but does not specifically teach such mechanism that requires very little force (e.g. printed page) that is able to rotate the guide member.

Nakayama, in the same field of endeavor for image forming apparatus (col. 1, lines 10-12), teaches a well-known example each of the plurality of guide members (guide member 20, fig. 4-5) rotate and balance themselves with a force applied by the paper (the guide member balances and rotates with the weight of printed paper received, col. 4, lines 26-40). In other words, Nakayama teaches a mechanism (e.g. center of gravity) that requires very little force (e.g. paper weight) in order to rotate the guide member.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify Sato image forming apparatus to include a guide member mechanism that rotate and balance themselves with a force applied by the paper..."

This assertion is respectfully traversed. Sato does not disclose, "each of the plurality of guide members rotate in a first direction and balance themselves with a force applied by the paper," as recited in claim 1. The Office action notes that first and second flappers 55 and 56 do not balance themselves with a force applied by the paper. Moreover, in Figures 8 and 9 of Sato, it appears that flappers rotate in opposite directions (first and second directions) when a paper passes by the first and second flappers 55 and 56 instead of moving in a first direction.

In addition, the Office Action appears to assert that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to modify Sato by substituting guide member 20 including rotating shaft 20 and plate-like guide members 23 for first flapper 55 and second flapper 56. However, according to Figures 8 and 9, sheet S1 moves in a vertical direction instead of a horizontal direction as taught by Nakayama. More specifically, col. 3, lines 52-54 of Nakayama discloses, "The rotating shaft 22 is disposed horizontally, and in parallel with the direction of discharge of the printed paper 24." If Nakayama's guide member 20 was substituted for a first flapper 55 and a second flapper 56, Nakayama's guide member would be perpendicular to the direction of movement of sheet S1, which would delay or block the movement of the paper in a vertical direction. In addition, the guide member 20 of Nakayama replacing flapper 55 would move in a direction opposite to the guide member 20 of Nakayama replacing flapper 56.

Accordingly, modifying Sato using the guide member 20 of Nakayama would not provide the features of claim 1, and would provide paper jams in the modified apparatus.

In addition, Sato and Nakayama, taken separately or in combination, do not disclose, teach, or suggest at least, "a reverse path which branches out of the exit path between the exit of the printing unit and the exit member, so that the direction of the movement of the paper, which moves backward along the exit path, is reversed and again supplied into the printing unit when the exit member rotates in a reverse direction, wherein each guide member further comprises a second guide side which guides the paper, which goes backward along the exit path, along the reverse path," as recited in claim 1.

According to amended claim 1, "each guide member further comprises a second guide side which guides the paper...along the reverse path." By guiding the paper along the reverse path, the paper is supplied to the printing unit when the exit member rotates in a reverse direction.

The Office Action appears to assert that Sato's flapper 55 or 56 corresponds to the "guide member" as recited in claim 1. However, Sato teaches only that the flapper 55 is switched in order to guide the printed paper to the first sheet discharging tray 41 or the flapper 56. Also, when the roller 52 is rotated in a reverse direction, the paper is fed to the third sheet discharging tray 43 guided by an upper edge of the flapper 56. Therefore, Sato fails to teach guide member comprising a second guide side which guides the paper along the reverse path to supply the paper to the printing unit again. Moreover, Nakayama fails to cure the deficiencies of Sato.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, claim 1 is patentably distinguishable from the cited references.

Claim 2 is cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Claims 3-28 depend from claim 1 and include all of the features of claim 1. Therefore, for at least these reasons, claims 2-28 are also patentably distinguishable from the cited references.

Similarly, Sato and Nakayama, taken separately or in combination, do not disclose, teach, or suggest at least, "a flexible guide member having a first guide side, the flexible guide member flexing in a first direction to guide the recording medium toward the exit path member and balance with itself with the force applied by the recording medium when the recording medium exits the printing unit and contacts the first guide side and returning to an original position by flexing in a second direction opposite to the first direction after the paper completely passes through the printing unit," as recited in claim 29. Therefore, for at least these reasons, claim 28 is patentably distinguishable from the cited references.

Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Summary

Claims 1 and 3-29 are pending and under consideration. It is respectfully submitted that none of the references taken alone or in combination disclose the present claimed invention.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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